

HELLO, EVERYONE. I know that many of you are aware that the Quality Management Systems of the Office of Aerospace Medicine and our parent organization, the Federal Aviation Administration's Aviation Safety line of business, were certified to the International Standards Organization's ISO 9001 Standard in 2006. Initial certification was a very complex and time-consuming process, and it required an enormous amount of process documentation and hard work by our employees.

However, the initial certification was just the beginning. Since that time, we have successfully completed two semiannual surveillance audits. We will continue to have semiannual surveillance audits until August of 2009, when we will undergo a complete reassessment.

We are all proud of our ISO certification. It has significantly enhanced

The Federal Air Surgeon's Column



By Fred Tilton, MD

AME Training Changes Initiated

the quality of our business through the standardization of our processes, and we expect that it will continue to help us improve. While you may find this information interesting, you may also be asking, "So what? What does this mean to me?"

The process changes that we are making will directly affect you as aviation medical examiners. In the past, you were required to attend a seminar by the end of the month in which you had taken a seminar six years earlier. Regional Flight Surgeons had the authority to extend your training date; our education division manager, Dr. **Richard Jones**, had the authority to grant additional extensions; and we tended to be fairly liberal in granting extension requests. Refresher training (seminar or computerized on-line training [MAMERC]) was due by the end of month in which you had attended a seminar three years earlier.

Regardless of the training method (seminar or MAMERC), your new training date was reset based on the date that you took your latest training. For example, if you were due training in June and you took refresher training in March to assure that you did not become delinquent, your future training date was changed to March. Conversely, if you took your training in the September

following your June due date, your new date would have been changed to September three years later. So, if you were conscientious, you were penalized several months, but you were rewarded if you delayed your training.

Under that system, we had numerous training delinquencies, we were out of compliance with our training policies, and we were beginning to be criticized by the ISO auditors. So, we have modified our training process to bring it into compliance with the ISO 9001 Standard. Your training due date will still be based on your most recent seminar completion date, but it will not be adjusted if training is done within the six-month window prior to the due date. If you are due training not later than June 30, and you complete the training after January 1, you will continue to have a June expiration date. If, however, you take your training after June 30, your expiration date will remain in June.

Additionally, since MAMERC is readily available on-line, if you are at a juncture where MAMERC is an option and you fail to take your training before your expiration date, we will terminate your designation until you complete your training. Regional Flight Surgeons have the authority to grant you one and only one six-month extension if you are due to attend a seminar, and your designation will be terminated if you do not complete a seminar by the end of the six-month extension. Of course, Dr. Jones has the authority to grant additional extensions if there are clear extenuating circumstances such as a natural disaster, terrorist activity, or a significant illness.

I hope these changes will encourage you to take your training early. I realize that they may seem a bit severe, but I believe they are fair, and I hope you will understand that they are necessary to keep us in compliance with our ISO certification.

Thanks to all of you for the great work you do for us and our airmen. Keep them flying!!!

—Fred

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